



A Study
On
The Status of Bangladeshi New Immigrants in Ontario:
Employment Perspectives

BENGALI INFORMATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (BIES)

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Table of Content

Acknowledgement	3
Executive Summary	4
1. Background and Rationale of the Study	6
2. Purpose and Objectives	8
3. Study Methodology	9
4. Data Collection	9
5. Limitations of the Study	9
6. SURVEY FINDINGS.....	10
6.1. Gender Ratio of the Respondents.....	10
6.2. Geographical Distribution of Respondents	10
6.3. Time of Residency of Respondents in Canada	10
6.4. Respondents' Highest Level of Education Achieved Outside of Canada	11
6.5. Respondent's Professions in Bangladesh.....	12
6.6. Respondents' Profession in Ontario, Canada.....	12
6.7. Respondents' Sources of Income in Canada	13
6.8. The Specific Scenario of Respondents Employments in Ontario, Canada	14
6.9. Respondents' Feeling about living in Ontario, Canada	15
7 Findings on Key informants' Interviews	15
7.1. The Challenges New Bangladeshi Immigrants in Ontario face in ways to employment	15
7.2. The Ways Forward to Getting Employed in Canada	16
8. Recommendation and Conclusion	18
Recommendation for New Immigrants.....	18
Recommendation for government and non –government institutions Bangladesh High Commission in Canada and Community based Organizations in Ontario	19
Appendix: A.....	21
BIES EMPLOYMENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE-2012	21
Demographic Information.....	21
Appendix: B	22
References	23

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We are also grateful to our valued members who assisted us in collecting primary information from the respondents. Ms. Manju Man Ara is one them. We appreciate her efforts. We are also grateful to another member-Mr. Mohammad Shariar Bhuiyan who assisted us by giving his technical expertise in enriching the report. Finally we are indebted to our Executive Committee members and directors who have worked as a team in accomplishing this research.

Golam Mostafa

On behalf of the Research Team

Toronto, January, 2013

A Study on The Status of Bangladeshi New Immigrants in Ontario: Employment Perspectives

Executive Summary

Canada is a country of immigrants. It still lacks huge skilled workers to keep its economic wheel rolling. The statistics show that Bangladeshi immigrants preferably settle in Ontario- one of the largest provinces of Canada. Almost two-third of Bangladeshi-Canadian community lives in this province and continues to make significant contributions to the Canadian economy. Relationship between Canada and Bangladesh are excellent with a strong focus on development cooperation, trade and investment, immigration and educational links. Bangladeshi highly skilled and educated professionals always prefer immigrating to Canada for permanent residency and the development of their careers growth. They are always passionate to contribute to the Canada's economic growth by using their skills and education.

The main purpose of this study was to find out the status of employment of newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario. A total of 100 newly arrived immigrants are surveyed and 6 Key Informants were interviewed. These respondents intensively live in Greater Toronto Area (94%) who are highly educated (72% have Masters Degree). Most of them are skilled worker who came as an immigrant within 3 years and were doing professional job (79%) in Bangladesh. But of these skilled workers 30% are now doing non professional (surviving) job, 32 are studying though 72% have Masters degrees and only 17% of total respondents surveyed are doing professional jobs whereas 79% of them had professional job in Bangladesh. However, the survey findings indicate that a total of 53% (32% student, 4% home-maker, 17% doing nothing)

of respondents are out of employment in Ontario. From the total respondents, 31% are satisfied about living in Ontario, Canada and the remaining have mixed feeling for failing in getting reasonable employment based on their education and experiences they brought in here. The findings shows that the main challenges the Bangladeshi new immigrants face to get professional jobs are language barrier, mismatch of education, experience and work culture, and stereotyping in employers' mentality, lack of research by them and insufficient and inappropriate information. The Bangladeshi new immigrants have to overcome these challenges by being motivated to work and improving their communication skills in English, upgrading their soft skills, getting proper information about labor market, improving self marketing strategy and increasing networks.

In a nutshell, we can say that Canada is a country of opportunities and is opened for all to build career and lives. This study reveals that most Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario are highly educated and experienced in their professions. If they become more aware of themselves in regard to Canadian labour market's requirements and get more assistance from the Cities of Ontario, Ontario Government and The Government of Canada to overcome their barriers, their success and satisfaction are inevitable.

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A Study on The Status of Bangladeshi New Immigrants in Ontario: Employment Perspectives

1. Background and Rationale of the Study

Employment increases independence, dignity and honour in everyone's life. UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) emphasizes that productive employment and decent work are the main routes out of poverty. MDG also puts forward increasing the employability of poor people, especially for women and youth, and to unlock their potential to contribute to growth. Ontario's 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy also emphasized on employment as its one of the cornerstones.

This strategy articulated a vision of a province where all people have the opportunity to realize their full potential.

The situation of poverty is acute in immigrant communities, especially among the new immigrants in Ontario. They get fewer jobs and earn less. A CBC-Business report in 2011 says 'despite having generally

Ontario is currently experiencing a growth in the number of people receiving social assistance. The Province and municipalities spent more than \$8.3 billion on the program in 2011-12. Despite the increase in the number of cases (individuals and families) receiving Ontario Works since the 2008 recession, the number of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) cases, now approximately 299,000, exceeds the number of Ontario Works cases, now approximately 265,000.

Source: '*Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario*' by Commission for the review of Social Assistance in Ontario, 2012

higher levels of education, new Canadians earn less than their native-born peers and are less likely to have a job'. The report citing the findings of Royal Bank of Canada's Report of 2011, mentioned that simply paying Canadian immigrants as much as their Canadian peers with

similar education levels could be worth as much as \$30.7 billion to Canada's economy. The report also mentions a huge wage gap between new immigrants and Canadian born peer. In 2005, the entire population of immigrants working full time in Canada earned about \$45,000 on average yearly. For recent immigrants, the average salary drops to just \$28,700. This report also shows the wage gaps between male and female worker. By gender, male immigrants had a higher earnings gap than

- In October 2012, there were 11,109,500 people of working age (15 years and over) in Ontario.
- There were 7,399,800 people in Ontario's labour force according to Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey for October 2012. Thus, 66.6% of Ontario's working age population was either employed or actively seeking employment. This percentage is also known as the labour force participation rate.
- As of October 2012, there were 6,788,900 people working in Ontario, 81.5% of them full time.
- Another 610,900 people were unemployed. This represented an unemployment rate of 8.3% for Ontario in October 2012.
 - Statistics Canada's Labour Market Survey, October 2012

female immigrants (24 per cent compared to 17 per cent). In dollar terms, this is about \$16,500 for men and \$7,000 for women. Conversely, the excess in the unemployment rate for women was larger than that for men, at 2.5 percentage points, compared to a 0.7 percentage point difference for men.ⁱ

Under these backdrops, Bengali Information and Employment Services- a community-based non-profit organization working for Bengali speaking community in Ontario felt great need to know about the status of employment of Bangladeshi new immigrants in Ontario. Demographic profile of this community is quite large in Canada. According to the Census 2011ⁱⁱ, total number of Bengali Speaking people in Toronto is 24,325 (Male 12445 Female 11880) and in Ontario is 38,685 (Male-19745, Female- 18945).

In order to understand the real employment situation of mostly Bangladeshi New Immigrants in Ontario, Bengali Information and Employment Services (BIES) has designed and conducted the study collecting information from the community people especially from the new Bangladeshi immigrants living in Ontario. Based on the findings of the study, BIES will be striving to make a realistic action plan for helping unemployed people of this community. The finding of this survey will also be used as baseline for BIES's employment program in future and act as evidence of employment status of Bangladeshi new immigrant community in Ontario. Additionally it will be a public resource for formulating employment related policy for the immigrant communities in Ontario.

2. Purpose and Objectives

The main purpose of this study is to find out the status of employment of newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

- Measure the status of employment of newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario
- Understand the matching points of respondents' professions in Bangladesh and in Ontario, Canada
- Assess the extent of satisfaction of those about living in Ontario, Canada
- Identify the barriers/ challenges in the ways of employment in Ontario, Canada
- Recommend ways for overcoming those challenges

3. Study Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are applied in this study. Literatures regarding this study have been reviewed for secondary information. A total of 100 newly arrived Bangladeshi immigrants are surveyed for primary data. They are selected by snowball sampling method for the interview. A total of six Key Informants (KIs) of this community is interviewed to know the in-depth of employment scenario of this population. However, as the total number and the location of the population was difficult to identify due to constraint of resources (both monetary and informational), the snowball sampling technique was applied in both cases- Survey and KIs interviews.

4. Data Collection

Data have been collected from the respondents through telephone and in person by asking a short structured questionnaire containing five close ended and one open ended questions (Please see in the annexure-A). A total of six Key Informants (KI) are interviewed in person and through telephone (Please see the list in the annexure-B). The data is collected during the months of September and October in 2012.

5. Limitations of the Study

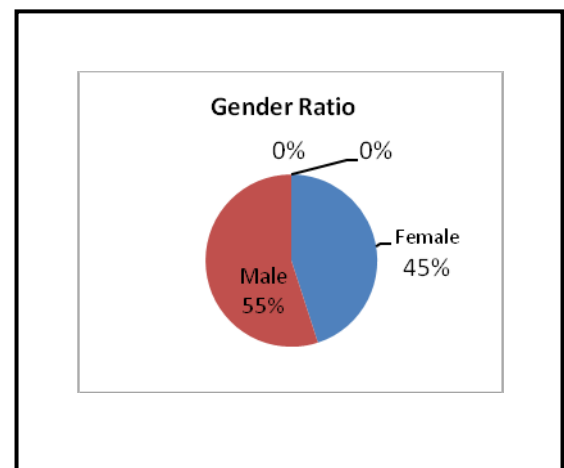
The main limitation of the survey was financial insufficiency. As BIES is a new organization, it lacks funding to finance the study; the survey team voluntarily has conducted it. However, they spend their own time and money to complete it. The team has faced some others challenges too, including insufficient information and literature about Bengali community in Ontario,

unavailability of statistics of inhabitancy of this community in different parts of the province. That's why, actual representation of the population could not be ensured. Information regarding family income of the respondents could not be collected due to the unwillingness of the respondents.

6. SURVEY FINDINGS

6.1. Gender Ratio of the Respondents

Out of total respondents surveyed, 45% is female and 55% are male. The status of all respondents in Canada is permanent resident. They are aged between 25-55 years and came to Canada in between 1-4 years.



6.2. Geographical Distribution of Respondents

The information for this survey is collected from the people who are mostly living in Greater Toronto Area and neighbouring cities. A total of 94% respondents are from Greater Toronto Area, 4% from Hamilton and 2% from London area.

6.3. Time of Residency of Respondents in Canada

The status of all respondents surveyed is permanent resident. Most of them came to

Length of time of Residency in Ontario	Number of respondents
0-1 years	04
1-2 years	21
2-3 years	45
3-4 years	13
4+ years	17
Total	100

Ontario, Canada as Skilled Worker. The highest number of respondents (45%) came in Canada in between 2 to 3 years, the second highest number (21%) in 1-2 years, and the third highest number (17%) in more than 4 years, and 13% of respondents came to Canada in between 3 to 4 years. Only 4% of them came here within one year.

6.4. Respondents' Highest Level of Education Achieved Outside of Ontario, Canada

A total of 72% of all respondents surveyed have Masters Degree (MA, MSS, MBA etc.) from outside of Canada and 12% has Bachelor degree.

We found two respondents having PhD degrees, 02 holding Engineering degree, two LLB, 2 Chartered Accountant, 3 MBBS and 1 BSC(Pharm.), 2 Higher Secondary Certificate and 2 Secondary School Certificate completed.

The data also shows that almost all respondents (96%) have post secondary education from the universities outside of Canada.

Level of Education	Number of Respondent
PhD	2
Masters (MA,MSS,MBA)	72
Engineering Degree	2
LLB/Barrister	2
MBBS	3
Chartered Accountant	2
B Pharmacy	1
Bachelor	12
Higher Secondary Certificate(HSC)completed	2
Secondary School Certificate(SSC) completed	2
Total	100

6.5. Respondent's Professions in Bangladesh

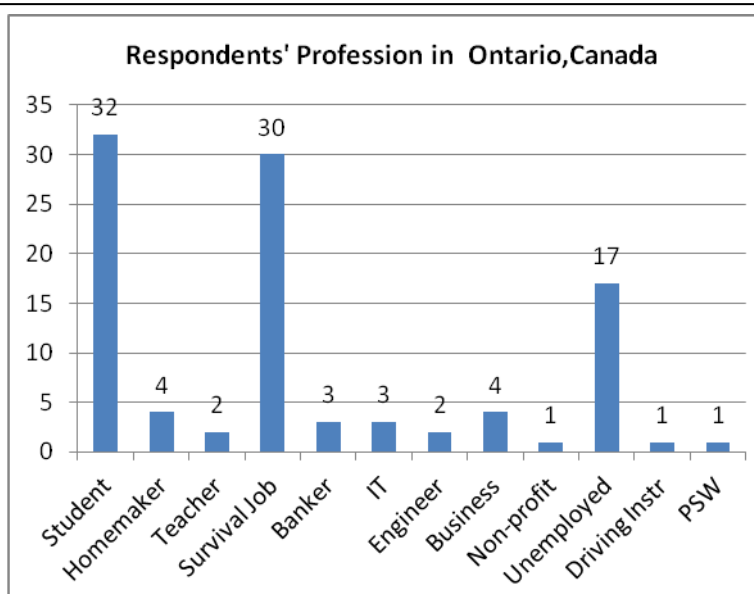
A total of 79% of respondents surveyed had professional jobs in Bangladesh, only 16% were homemakers and 5% student. The data shows that the highest number of respondents (15%) worked in executive positions in different companies. The second highest number of respondents (12%) worked as teacher in school, colleges and universities. A

Respondents' Profession in Bangladesh	
Name of Profession	Number of Respondent
Teacher	12
Home maker	16
Banker	05
Doctor	04
Engineer	04
IT	08
Accountant	06
Non-Profit (Social Service)	11
Telecom	01
Lawyers	02
Student	05
Private Service	15
Journalist	01
Public Service	04
Business	06
Total	100

total of 11% respondents worked in non-profit organizations, holding executive positions. The data also shows that 6% respondents were businessmen, 6% accountant, 5% bankers, 4% public servants, 4% physician, 4% engineers, 1% Journalist and 1% marketing in Tele- communication.

6.6. Respondents' Profession in Ontario, Canada

The highest number of respondents (32%) is found studying in different community colleges and universities in Canada though they (96%) said



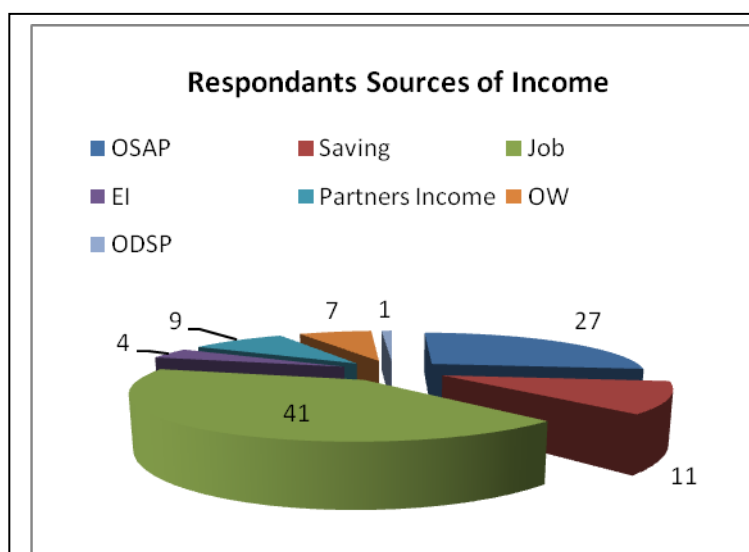
they already have post-secondary education from outside of Canada. The second highest number of respondents (30%) said they are doing non-professional jobs. According to them, non-professional jobs are the jobs that are not relevant to their professions they held before they came to Canada. They also preferred calling those jobs as survival jobs. Out of the total respondents surveyed, 17% are found unemployed which is doubler than provincial unemployment rate (7.9%). We found 17% of respondents doing professional jobs against 81% in Bangladesh. Therefore, the difference is 64%. However, the data reveals that if the students and homemaker are treated as unemployed, the number of unemployment goes up to 53% (32+4+17) that is really alarming. This finding is also very relevant to other study even conducted by the Government of Canada.

According to Statistics Canada Employment Report -2006, for all Asians aged 25 to 54, their employment rate was much weaker than that of the Canadian born, especially among very recent immigrants. Their employment rate was only 63.8%, compared with 83.1% for their counterparts born in Canadaⁱⁱⁱ.

In comparison to Canadian employment status, Bangladeshi new immigrants are below the average of employment rate.

6.7. Respondents' Sources of Income in Canada

A total of 41% of respondents depends upon the income from jobs



(professional, semi-professional and survival together). The second highest number of respondents' (27%) sources of income is Ontario Students Assistance Program (OSAP), 7% Ontario Works, 9% husbands/ Wife's income, 4% Employment Insurance and 11% is business or own saving. The data reveals that the dependency on OSAP for maintaining family by a significant percentage of respondents is because of lack of professional jobs and fear for survival jobs related to heavy physical labour and low pay rate.

6.8. The Specific Scenario of Respondents Employments in Ontario, Canada

We have tried to make a profession wise comparison between Bangladesh and Ontario, Canada.

Teachers (12) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 2 employed as teacher, 6 students, 1 financial advisor, and 03 unemployed.

Homemakers (16) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 9 still homemaker, 4 students, and 3 doing survival jobs.

Banker (05) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 3 employed and other 2 student.

Doctor (04) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 2 students, 2 doing survival jobs

Engineer (04) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 3 employed in same profession and 1 student

IT Professional (08) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 01 employed in semi-professional job, 2 same professions, 1 student, 3 survival job, 1 banking job.

Accountants (06) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 03 students and 3 Survival Job.

Non-profit Sector Executives (11) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 1 professional Job, 4 students, 3 unemployed, 3 survival job.

Private Sector Executive (15) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 8 survival jobs, 4 unemployed, 1 administrative Assistant, 1 banker, 1 IT professional.

Telecom (1) Marketing Executive in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 1 doing security Job.

Public Servants (04) in Bangladesh: In Ontario, 1 unemployed, 1 in tax firm, 1 student and 1 security job

Lawyer (2) of Bangladesh: In Ontario, 1 student and 1 unemployed

Businessman (6) of Bangladesh: In Ontario, 3 survival job, 1 student, 1 driving instructor and 1 unemployed

Students (5): In Ontario, 3 entry level job, 1 professional and 1 unemployed.

6.8. Respondents' Feeling about living in Ontario, Canada

Despite of huge unemployment among the

respondents surveyed, 23% of respondents

said they are satisfied by living in Canada,

30% are dissatisfied, 33% is neither satisfied

nor dissatisfied, 8% said they are very

satisfied and only 6% said they are very

dissatisfied. Overall feeling seem positive.



7 Findings on Key informants' Interviews

7.1. The Challenges New Bangladeshi Immigrants in Ontario face in ways to employment

A total of Six Key Informants (KI) is interviewed to find out the challenges that the new Bangladeshi immigrants face in the initial years of their settlement in Ontario. The KI are the persons who have been living in Ontario for long time and well-known about the community. They have also been successful in their professions and are well known to the potentials, challenges of Bangladeshi community in Ontario. In the interview, they indentified the following challenges the Bangladeshi new immigrants face in the initial years to find employment in Ontario.

- Language barriers - low level of listening and speaking English
- Lack of knowledge in selecting city for living and getting employment
- Overcoming superiority complex being highly educated and holding upper positions in professional and societal level in back home that results in huge delay to integrate into Canadian labour market and society as well

- Overcoming cultural barriers specially by the women immigrants to integrate themselves into the Canadian social and cultural practices
- Low/no demand of Bangladeshi educational qualifications and job experiences in Canadian job market
- Misunderstanding about Canadian experience and employers' requirements
- Lack of awareness about Canadian professional etiquette and work culture
- Hard to adapt to the new IT based working system and fast-pace customer services oriented business environment in Canada
- Mismatch between Bangladeshi knowledge based education with Canadian skills based education
- Stereotyping among Canadian employers - biasness in name, culture, race, and religion
- Need for immediate earning that affect professional job searching efforts negatively
- Doing mistake in getting admission into inappropriate degree or diploma courses without proper research just only to get OSAP money
- Due to shortage of saving, newcomers has to choose survival job instead of professional jobs (sales, security and factory labourer)
- Lack of doing research about Canadian labour market, culture, society before immigrating to Canada
- Insufficient and inappropriate information in right time and being misguided by the predecessors

7.2. The Ways Forward to Getting Employed in Canada

The Key Informants interviewed in this study suggest the following recommendation to overcome the challenges.

- ✓ Improve communication skills especially in English
- ✓ Make right decision based on the appropriate Information regarding education and career
- ✓ Perform proper research about life and labour market before or immediate after immigrating to Canada
- ✓ Need to upgrade the skills and qualification by doing thorough research as per the requirement of Canadian employers
- ✓ Improve self-marketing approaches and build networking
- ✓ Start in semi-professional career first wherever appropriate and then professional career
- ✓ Self-awareness is vital according to local values and needs
- ✓ Making new immigrants aware that employment depends on specific skills not on degrees/diploma and positions held in back home.
- ✓ Equip new immigrants with the skills to provide excellent customer services along with positive attitudes
- ✓ Community based organizations should come forward to provide information and assistance
- ✓ Be determined for being permanently settled and successful in Canada keeping confusion away
- ✓ Take advantages of different bridging programs funded by the governments
- ✓ Receive and utilize the supports and assistances provided by settlements and employment agencies
- ✓ Fix short-term and long-term goals with strong determination
- ✓ Increase the role of community based organizations
- ✓ Involve in volunteering in professional fields, and taking mentorship, job shadowing and co-op through proper research
- ✓ Attend local professional meeting, seminar, and workshop to know about what is going on in out there.

8. Recommendation and Conclusion

In order to integrate new Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario into the Canadian labour market and decrease unemployment rate in this community, we make the following recommendations based on the findings of the study.

Recommendation for New Immigrants

1. The new immigrants should be made aware about Canadian labour market through proper information and counselling and choose their career path. They might take assistance from Employment Counsellor, Job Developers, and Case Workers of different programs being funded by Government of Ontario, Cities, Foundations and Government of Canada.
2. They should improve their communication skills in the areas of listening, speaking, writing and reading English by using opportunities of government funded free ESL programs and free online courses.
3. Their job searching outlook should be broadened and very flexible; even if they find opportunities outside of Toronto or Ontario they should seriously consider for relocation (if possible).
4. They need to assess their skills and qualification thoroughly and comprehensively in regard to the needs and practice of Canadian labour market.
5. We recommend them to contact immediately the mentors (professionals working in their own field for long time in Canada) in their related profession to find out barriers and ways forward. The mentor might be chosen by him/herself or assistance from the Non-profit organizations or community based organizations.

6. They should focus on building professional networks by using social and professional media .e.g. face book, Twitter, LinkedIn etc and attend job fairs, enroll themselves in placement agencies.
7. The new immigrants should upgrade qualifications, skills, work place etiquette, self-marketing skills-resume, cover letter, interview techniques, cold calling and other work related essential skills by attending different workshops offered by governmental and non-profit organization and community colleges.
8. We recommend the new immigrants should take those academic courses which conclude with job placement opportunity.
9. The newcomers might participate in co-op programs offered by community agencies, adult Learning Centers for Foreign Trained Professionals
10. They should also underscore the need to integrate themselves with their own community immediately after landing (if possible) and then mainstream society because community members can help them better due to language advantage and having same background.
11. The new immigrants should identify transferable skills seriously and ways to market him/herself in effective ways employers.

Recommendations for relevant government and non government institutions and Bangladesh High Commission in Canada

1. Relevant government and non-government institutions to reach those new immigrants and provide them necessary supports for removing their employment barriers

2. Bangladesh High Commission in Ottawa might set up a satellite office in Toronto to provide information and referral services to the new immigrants in Greater Toronto Area and neighbouring cities.
3. Community based organizations should provide employment services to the new immigrants by placing them to ethnic employer and other employer too.

In conclusion, we would like to say that Canada is a country of opportunities and is open to all for building career and lives. This study reveals that most Bangladeshi immigrants in Ontario are highly educated and experienced in their professions. If they become more aware of themselves in regard to Canadian labour market's requirements, they will be able to make a big difference in their own lives and in the economy of Ontario. Therefore, Ontario Government has a big role to play in using these huge potential for the economic emancipation of this province and betterment of this community as well. Needless to say, despite of having vast unemployment/underemployment in this community, their feeling about living in Ontario, Canada seems positive. One of the important reasons is, inherently the people of this community become satisfied with less. Finally we would say that passion and dedication are the keys for career development everywhere in the world. What a new immigrant in Ontario needs additionally, are better communication skills, informed goal setting and positive attitudes. Then success is inevitable.

Appendix: A

BIES EMPLOYMENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE-2012

Name of Data Collector:	Date:
.....	
Signature of data collector	
Data verifier's Name and Signature:	

Demographic Information

Name of the Respondent:	Sex: M/F.....
Address...	Age:.....
.....	
Phone:	Email:

1. How long have you been in Canada?
2. What is your highest level of education achieved outside of Canada?.....
3. What was your profession outside of Canada?.....
4. What are you doing in Canada (profession)?.....
5. What is your primary source of income here in Canada?.....
6. What is your level of satisfaction in regard to living in Canada (0-10).....
(0 is highly dissatisfied and 10 highly satisfied)

Additional comments(if any):

.....
.....
....

Appendix: B

List of Key Informant

1. Assaduz Zaman, CGA, Officer, Canada Revenue Agency, Ottawa
2. Jashim Uddin, Bunissman, Danforth Avenue, Toronto
3. Kazi Sirajul Islam, General Secretary, Bangladesh Centre and Community Services
4. Nasima Akter, Executive Director, Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services
5. Shahidul Islam Mintu, Editor-Bengali Times and Bangla Mail, Toronto
6. Towhid Noman, Coordinator, OBSESS

References

ⁱ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2011/12/19/rbc-immigrants-report.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3520005&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=Toronto&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&BI=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=3520005>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-606-x/71-606-x2008002-eng.htm>